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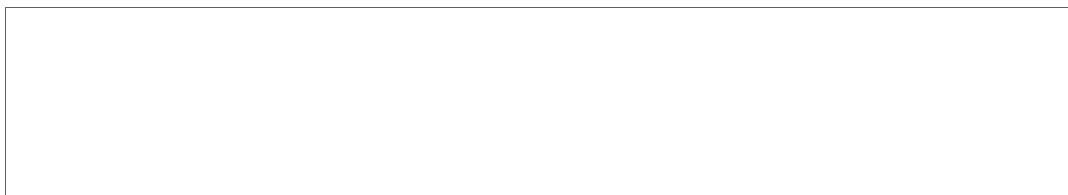
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EXDIS CONTRA: S/S - FOR EXDIS CONTRA DISTRIBUTION

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: OVIP, PGOV, PREL, HO, NU

SUBJECT: CODEL ASPIN

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: CODEL ASPIN'S 4-6 APRIL VISIT TO HONDURAS WAS ENTIRELY DEVOTED TO THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE ISSUE. AFTER A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT AZCONA AT WHICH THE PRESIDENT REITERATED HONDURAN SUPPORT FOR FUNDING FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE EFFORT TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CRISIS, THE CODEL TRAVELED TO THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE CAMP AT YAMALES, RECEIVED SITUATION BRIEFINGS, AND WAS PRESENTED TO A TROOP FORMATION AT THE NEARBY REGIONAL COMMAND QUILALI BASE CAMP. THEY SUBSEQUENTLY OVERFLEW THE MILITARY INSTRUCTION CENTER (WHICH THE SANDINISTAS HAD CLAIMED TO HAVE DESTROYED DURING THE 22-23 MARCH FIGHTING IN THE AREA) AND VISITED BOTH THE FDN MILITARY AND FDN-SUPPORTED CIVILIAN HOSPITALS AT CAPIRE. THE DAY OF FIELD VISITS CONCLUDED WITH A DINNER HOSTED BY FIVE MEMBERS OF THE FDN DIRECTORATE AT THEIR OFFICE IN TEGUCIGALPA. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE THE FOLLOWING DAY, CONGRESSMAN ASPIN PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND THEN JOINED THE REMAINDER OF THE PARTY IN A VISIT TO THE UNO/FDN PRESS OFFICE, WHERE THE STUDIO OF RADIO 15 SEPTEMBER AND THE FDN'S SMALL VIDEO PRODUCTION FACILITY ARE LOCATED. END SUMMARY.

3. CONGRESSMAN ASPIN, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, MET WITH PRESIDENT AZCONA AT THE PRESIDENT'S HOME EARLY MORNING OF 5 APRIL. THE CONGRESSMAN OPENED HIS QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT BY OBSERVING THAT THE VOTE ON ASSISTANCE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE WAS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE BEFORE THE CONGRESS, AND ONE OF THE KEY POINTS IN THE DEBATE WAS THE VIEWS OF THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ON THE SUBJECT-WHETHER ASSISTANCE FOR THE CONTRAS HELPED OR HINDERED THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION, HOW THE COUNTRIES FELT ABOUT THE CONTRAS THEMSELVES, AND WHETHER THEY SHOULD BE FUNDED OR NOT. PRESIDENT AZCONA REPLIED THAT WHILE HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR COSTA RICA, THE OPINION IN HONDURAS WAS THAT YES, THE CONTRAS SHOULD BE FUNDED. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE THE CONTRAS GAINING ENOUGH STRENGTH TO OUST THE SANDINISTA

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IN AN OUTRIGHT MILITARY VICTORY, BUT THAT HE REGARDED THEM AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF PRESSURE UPON THE SANDINISTAS TOWARD A POLITICAL SOLUTION--AN ELEMENT OF PRESSURE THAT SHOULD BE COMBINED WITH OTHERS, INCLUDING PRESSURE FROM CONTADORA FOR INTERNAL DEMOCRATIZATION, PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNAL PARTIES FOR MORE DEMOCRATIZATION, PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNAL PARTIES FOR MORE DEMOCRATIZATION, PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PARTY GROUPINGS, AND PERHAPS OTHER STEPS AS WELL, SUCH AS A BLOCKADE.

4. AS TO DIPLOMATIC STEPS, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT CONTADORA WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, AND THAT EVEN A CONTADORA DOCUMENT WHICH NICARAGUA REFUSED TO SIGN WOULD BE AN ADVANTAGE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES BEFORE WORLD OPINION. WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF THE INTERNAL NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES AS REFLECTED IN THE DOCUMENT THEY RELEASED INSIDE NICARAGUA, THE PRESIDENT NOTED HE HAD USED THE THEME IN HIS FRIDAY ADDRESS TO THE HONDURAN NATION ON THE BORDER PROBLEM, AND EXPECTED BOTH THE GOVERNMENTS AND MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES TO ENDORSE THE DOCUMENT--SOMETHING THAT HE WAS ALREADY WORKING ON, HE SAID. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS OUT OF THE CONTADORA MEETING THAT WAS THEN UNDERWAY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME EXPECTED THE MEETING TO KEEP THE PROCESS ON TRACK WITH NO DETOURS--MAKING THE BOTTOM LINE POINT THAT NICARAGUA IS THE EXCEPTION IN A REGION OF DEMOCRACIES. THE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT IN ANY CASE, HONDURAS WOULD NOT BE THE ONE TO WALK AWAY FROM THE CONTADORA PROCESS, AND THAT IF ANY PARTICIPANT WOULD WALK OUT, IT WOULD BE NICARAGUA.

5. HE AGAIN EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO TURN WORLD OPINION AGAINST NICARAGUA, OBSERVING THAT HE HAD RECENTLY READ A HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT THAT WAS VERY NEGATIVE TOWARD THE SANDINISTAS. TO THE CONGRESSMAN'S OBSERVATION THAT SOME HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS WERE STILL BENDING OVER BACKWARD TO EXCUSE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT, PRESIDENT AZCONA RESPONDED THAT IT HAD BEEN VERY EASY TO BE ANTI-SOMOZA, SINCE THE FAMILY HAD 45 YEARS OF ACCUMULATED GUILT BUILT UP, AND SHOULD BE BLAMED FOR THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT IN NICARAGUA AS WELL AS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEY WERE ACTUALLY PRESENT.

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6. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM THE CONGRESSMAN, PRESIDENT AZCONA SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE INDICATIONS OF SERIOUS DIFFERENCES AMONG THE NINE SANDINISTA COMMANDERS, AND THAT IN ANY CASE SUBSTITUTING ANY SMALLER GROUP OF THEM FOR THE COLLECTIVE WHOLE WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE AS FAR AS SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT BEHAVIOR WAS CONCERNED. HE ADDED THAT EVEN IF PRESSURE ON THEM WERE TO GROW MUCH MORE SEVERE, HE DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BREAK THE SANDINISTA DIRECTORATE, BUT RATHER THAT UNDER VERY STRONG PRESSURE THEY WOULD COLLECTIVELY SEEK TO CUT THEIR LOSSES BY NEGOTIATING A PRESERVATION OF SOME OF THEIR POSITIONS AND THEIR ABILITY TO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY.

7. PRESIDENT AZCONA DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD ACCEPT AN ELECTORAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM BECAUSE THEY WOULD KNOW THEY WOULD LOSE AN ELECTION AND THUS WOULD NOT BE

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ABLE TO PRESERVE A TOE-HOLD ON POWER. IN A FINAL EXCHANGE OF QUESTIONS, PRESIDENT AZCONA AGREED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN NICARAGUA WAS VERY BAD AND WAS ITSELF A POTENT SOURCE OF PRESSURE ON THE SANDINISTA REGIME, AND WENT ON TO MENTION THAT HONDURAS WAS ITSELF MAKING SIGNIFICANT EFFORTS AT ECONOMIC REFORM, WAS ENCOUNTERING SOME SUCCESS, AND HOPED FOR CONTINUING SUPPORT FROM THE U.S. CONGRESS, IN THE FORM OF BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE, TO ENABLE THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE THE DOMESTIC CONFIDENCE-BUILDING EFFORT THAT WAS UNDER WAY. THE PRESIDENT WAS ASSURED BY CONGRESSMAN ASPIN THAT HONDURAS HAS MANY FRIENDS IN CONGRESS AND, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF THEIR EFFORTS TO BUILD DEMOCRACY, THERE WAS A LARGE RESERVOIR OF GOOD WILL IN CONGRESS FOR HONDURAS TO CALL UPON WHEN HELP WAS NEEDED.

8. AFTER THE CALL ON PRESIDENT AZCONA, CONGRESSMAN ASPIN JOINED THE REMAINDER OF HIS PARTY FOR THE HELICOPTER RIDE TO THE YAMALES HEADQUARTERS OF THE FDN. WHILE THERE, THEY WERE BRIEFED ON THE MILITARY SITUATION BY FDN DIRECTORATE MEMBER AND MILITARY COMMANDER ENRIQUE BERMUDEZ, THE STRATEGIC COMMAND STAFF ASSISTANTS FOR INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONS, "INVISIBLE" AND "MIKE-LIMA," AND SPOKE AT LENGTH WITH THE REGIONAL COMMANDERS GATHERED THERE. THE PARTY SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED TO THE NEARBY BASE CAMP OF REGIONAL COMMAND QUILALI, WHERE A TROOP FORMATION WAS HELD AND THE CONGRESSMAN AND MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY WERE INTRODUCED BY FDN PRESIDENT ADOLFO CALERO AND HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS. THE PARTY SUBSEQUENTLY OVERFLEW THE MILITARY INSTRUCTION CENTER (CIM), WHICH THE SANDINISTAS HAD CLAIMED TO HAVE DESTROYED DURING THEIR LATE MARCH INCURSION INTO HONDURAS, AND THEN VISITED THE FDN HOSPITALS AT CAPIRE, ONE PRIMARILY INTENDED FOR MILITARY PATIENTS AND ONE FOR CIVILIAN PATIENTS FROM THE GENERAL AREA (PRIMARILY NICARAGUAN REFUGEES, BUT ALSO INCLUDING HONDURANS). THE CIVILIAN PATIENTS WERE SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF A MEASLES OUTBREAK--ONE PATIENT HAD DIED THE DAY OF THE VISIT. THE MILITARY HOSPITAL WAS TREATING SOME OF THE WOUNDED FROM THE SANDINISTA INCURSION, AND WHILE THE PARTY WAS THERE THE UNO/FDN MEDEVAC HELICOPTER BROUGHT IN TWO WOUNDED FROM FORCES WHICH WERE INSIDE NICARAGUA--ONE OF THEM, COMMANDER CORAL, STILL WALKING NINE DAYS AFTER HIS WOUND, HAVING HIKEED EIGHT DAYS TO REACH A SAFE LOCATION FOR THE HELICOPTER TO EXTRACT HIM. HE HAD A BULLET WOUND IN THE LOWER GROIN.

9. UPON RETURN TO TEGUCIGALPA, THE CODEL ATTENDED A DINNER AT THE FDN DIRECTORATE HOUSE WHICH WAS HOSTED BY THE FIVE FDN DIRECTORS WHO WERE IN THE COUNTRY--ADOLFO CALERO, ENRIQUE BERMUDEZ, ALFONSO CALLEJAS, INDALECIO RODRIGUES, AND ARISTIDEZ SANCHEZ--AS WELL AS SEVERAL REGIONAL COMMANDERS (DR. AURELIANO OF THE SEGOVIA REGIONAL COMMAND AND RIGOBERTO OF THE JORGE SALAZAR I REGIONAL COMMAND) AND THE DEPARTMENT HEADS OF ALL THE FDN STAFF DEPARTMENTS--CARLOS ICAZA OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT, DR. THOMAS OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, ROMANO OF THE LOGISTICS DEPARTMENT AND SEVERAL OF HIS ASSISTANTS, OSCAR MONTES OF THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT, AND OTHERS.

10. ON SUNDAY MORNING, CONGRESSMAN ASPIN MET FOR SEVERAL HOURS AT THE EMBASSY WITH EMBASSY PERSONNEL TO DISCUSS THE DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE PROGRAM AND FOR A BRIEFING ON SANDINISTA ORDER OF BATTLE INFORMATION. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A VISIT TO THE FDN PRESS OFFICE, WHERE THE CONGRESSMAN VIEWED THE STUDIO FACILITIES OF THE FDN'S RADIO 15 SEPTIEMBRE AND THE NEWLY-INSTALLED SMALLF IDEO PRODUCTION FACILITY. THE VISIT INCLUDED A VIEWING OF THE

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VIDEO TAPE OF THE ATTACK ON OCOTAL IN 1984 IN WHICH  
COMANDANTE GRIEGO WAS WOUNDED--HIS SUICIDE IN ORDER TO  
FREE HIS COMPANIONS TO MAKE THEIR ESCAPE FROM THE OCOTAL  
AREA HAS MADE HIM A SUBJECT OF LEGEND AND SONG, ONE OF  
WHICH WAS SUNG FOR THE CONGRESSMAN BY "SURDO," THE  
BLIND GUITARIST OF THE NICARAO REGIONAL COMMAND, AND HIS  
GROUP, WHO HAVE BEEN AT THE PRESS OFFICE FOR SEVERAL  
WEEKS RECORDING THEIR REPERTOIRE. THE PARTY WENT  
DIRECTLY TO THEIR AIRCRAFT FROM THIS VISIT.

11. COMMENT: THIS MESSAGE WAK NOT SEEN NOR CLEARED BY  
CONGRESSMAN ASPIN.

NEVERTHELESS, THE LOCAL IMPRESSION IS  
THAT THE NET EFFECT OF THE VISIT WAS QUITE POSITIVE,  
AND THAT IT MIGHT TAKE THE CODEL SOME TIME TO DIGEST THE  
FULL IMPORT OF ALL THAT WAS SEEN AND HEARD. THE VISIT  
WAS NOT WITHOUT ITS TENSIONS--OF THE CONGRESSMAN'S  
COMPANIONS, ROBERT LEIKEN WAS PARTICULARLY DISPOSED TO BE  
PROVOCATIVE, AND IN REPORTEDLY CARRYING HIS "REFORM THE  
CONTRAS" THESIS INTO THE RANKS OF THE FDN, BY IN EFFECT  
ASKING INDIVIDUAL SUBORDINATE TROOP COMMANDERS WHY THEY  
DID NOT GET RID OF THEIR CORRUPT LEADERSHIP (HIS HOSTS),  
HE ACTED IN A WAY THAT EVEN THE MOST DISCIPLINED ARMED  
FORCE MIGHT HAVE CONSIDERED INAPPROPRIATE. OF THE  
SUBORDINATE TROOP COMMANDERS SO APPROACHED, DOCTOR  
AURELIANO IN PARTICULAR REACTED VIGOROUSLY, AND THE  
ENERGETIC CONVERSATION THAT RESULTED WAS CONTINUED INTO  
THE DINNER AFTER THE VISIT TO THE FIELD. THE FDN  
LEADERS WHO WERE THE TARGETS OF LEIKEN'S THESIS DID NOT  
PARTICIPATE IN THE CONVERSATION, LEAVING THE DEBATING TO  
LEIKEN, AURELIANO, AND RIGOBERTO, BUT THEY DID NOT  
APPEAR PARTICULARLY PLEASED BY THIS ASPECT OF THE VISIT.  
MAKING ALLOWANCES FOR UNORTHODOX INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUE  
ON LEIKEN'S PART, HE MAY HIMSELF NEVERTHELESS HAVE  
PROFITED FROM THE EXCHANGE. END COMMENT.  
(DRAFTED-POL:JWMALLETT) FERCH

END OF MESSAGE

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